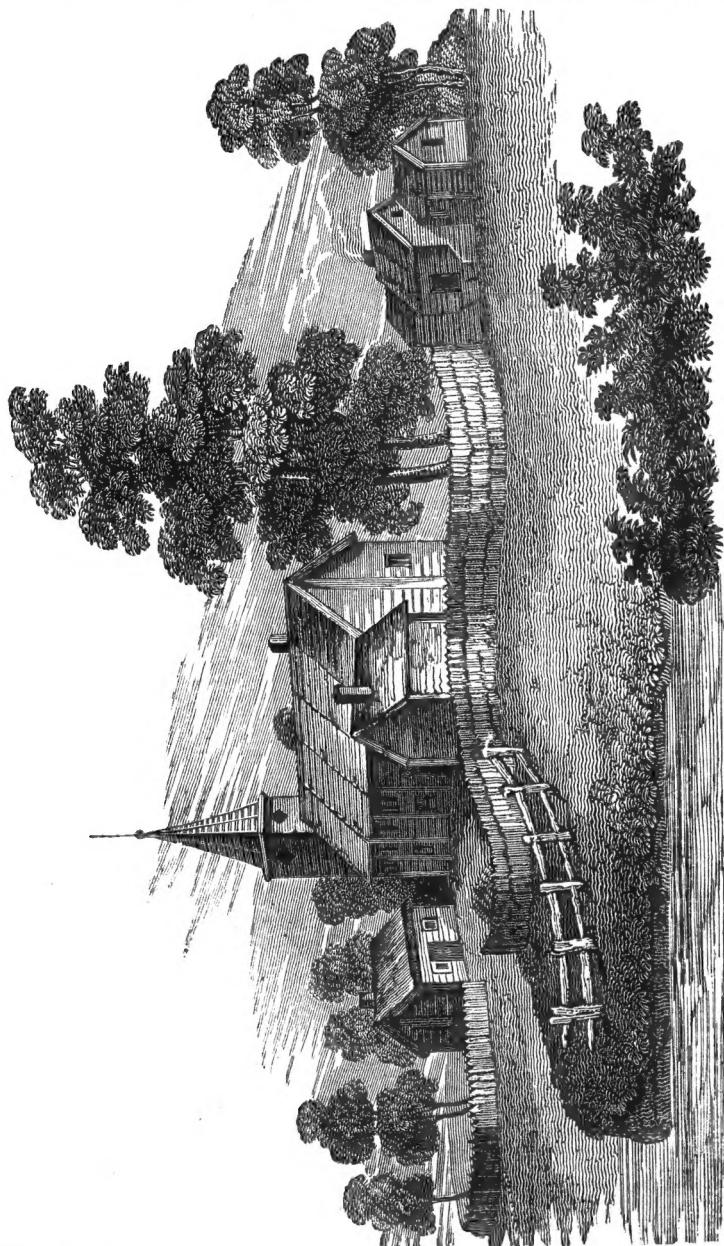


Missionary Papers

For the Use of the Weekly and Monthly Contributors to the Church Missionary Society.



CHURCH AND MISSION-SCHOOL AT THE RED-RIVER COLONY.

In the Paper No. XXX. for Midsummer 1823, some account was given of the North-American Indians, and of the labours of the Society and other bodies of Christians among them: we shall, in this Paper, give further information relative to the Indians and to the Society's Mission among them. The Engraving on the First Page is taken from a Drawing made by one of the Missionaries: it represents the Church built at the Settlement on the Red River, south of Lake Winnipeg, with the School House: the Church is an humble structure; but it is an object of much interest, as being the first Protestant Church ever built in those wide regions where the Indians roam.

CHARACTER AND STATE OF THE INDIANS OF NORTH-WEST AMERICA.

While the Society's Missionaries act as Ministers to the Settlers in these parts, the ultimate object of the Mission is the conversion of the surrounding Heathen. The Indians who wander over the vast plains which lie within reach of the Settlement are of various tribes, and are often in bitter hostility with one another. We shall give the character of some of the chief tribes, in the words of the Rev. John West and the Rev. David T. Jones, two of the Missionaries. The following extracts shew, first, some of the unfavourable points in their character.

Revenge.—Some Sioux Indians had tomahawked and scalped the Son of a Saulteaux: laying his hand on his heart as he related the tragical event, he exclaimed, "It is HERE that I am affected, and FEEL my loss;" then raising his hand above his head, he said, "The spirit of my Son cries for vengeance—It must be appeased—his bones lie on the ground uncovered!"

The Indians in general are truly barbarous toward their captive enemies. A war-party of Sioux Indians lately fell on the wives and children of some of the Saulteaux, another tribe, while the men were absent, and killed the whole party, except one woman and two or three of the children: with the most wanton and savage cruelty, they proceeded to put one of these little ones to death, by first turning him for a short time close before a fire, when they cut off one of his arms and told him to run; and afterward cruelly tortured him, with the other children, till he died. It is not an uncommon practice for them to cut flesh from their captives, and, when cooked, to eat small bits of it, as well as to give some to their children, with a little of their blood; no doubt under the idea that it will give them courage, and a spirit of hatred and revenge against their enemies.

The Missionary justly asks—

What can calm these ferocious feelings, and curb this savage fury of the passions, shewn in the torture of defenceless women and infants, but the influence of Christianity, the best civilizer of the wandering natives of these dreary wilds?

Pride.—These poor creatures pride themselves on their independence: with all the wretched appearance of the lowest class in the streets of London, they are full of boasting and triumph in their self-dependent state and

superior skill. An Indian said to me—"It is true the English know some things which the Indians do not; but the Indians know much more, in some respects, than the white people." I asked him to point out an instance: he said, "White man goes to the woods, and gets lost—cannot come home: when did an Indian do this? A dog will find his way home, but a white man cannot." I had nothing to say to this sharp reply; and, at the same time, admired his adroitness in selecting an instance so much to the point. They take as many wives as they please: all the lowest and most laborious drudgery is imposed upon the wife, and she is not permitted to eat till after her lord has finished his meal: he, amidst the burdensome toil of life, and a desultory and precarious existence, will only condescend to carry his gun, take care of his horse, and hunt as want may compel him.

Superstition.—When the relatives of the Stone Indians are sick, they are almost constantly addressing their god, drumming and making a great noise, and sprinkling them with water where they complain of pain. When spoken to of that God and Saviour whom the white people adore, they called him fool, saying that he never came to their country or did any thing for them—*so vain were they in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

But there are favourable traits, also, in the character of these Heathens.

Acknowledgment of God.—On visiting an Indian in his tent, the pipe was immediately lighted: having pointed the stem to the heavens and then to the earth, an Indian gave the first whiff to the "Master of Life," and afterward handed it to the visitor. The Indian then delivered what appeared to be an address to the "Great Spirit"; and the party seated round him used an expression apparently of assent, in the middle and conclusion of his speech. Though addressing an unknown God, what a reflection does his conduct, in returning thanks for his short and precarious supplies to the Master of Life, cast upon multitudes who profess the knowledge of the True God!

They name their children after some animal or object in nature: it is common for them on these occasions to make a feast, and address the "Master of Life," asking him to protect the child, and make him a good hunter: the Stone Indians, who are notorious horse-stealers without seeming to think it evil, add a request that the child may become a good horse-stealer!

Love of Country—Their public speeches are full of energy and pathos: no Greek or Roman ever spoke perhaps with more sublimity than one of their Chiefs when asked to remove with his tribe to a distance from their native soil—"We were born," said he, "on this ground—our fathers lie buried in it—Shall we say to the bones of our fathers, 'Arise! and come with us into a foreign land!'"

Parental Affection—When I particularly noticed (says Mr. West) one of the children of the Stone Indians, the boy's father was so affected with the attention, that with tears he exclaimed, "See! the God takes notice of my child!"

Two families came to my residence (he adds) in a state of starvation: necessity had compelled them to eat their dogs; and they themselves were harnessed to their sledges, dragging them in a most wretched and emaciated condition. One of the men appeared to be reduced to the last stage of existence; and, on giving him a fish and a few cooked potatoes, such was his affection for his children, that, instead of voraciously devouring the small portion of food, he divided it into morsels, and gave it to them in the most affectionate manner. His children, from their appearance, had partaken of by far the largest share of that scanty supply which he had lately been able to obtain by hunting.

Mr. Jones adds the following illustration of their parental feelings:—

PROGRESS OF THE SOCIETY'S NORTH-WEST AMERICA MISSION.

The Rev. John West, the first Missionary, reached the Settlement in October 1820 and left in June 1823: the Rev. David Jones arrived in October 1823, and the Rev. W. Cockran in August 1825. Mr. West, on leaving the Mission, gives the following account of its progress: alluding to the death of a Gentleman who fell in one of the unhappy conflicts which took place some years since between the Hudson's-Bay and North-West Companies, he writes—

I have just had the happiness to see the accomplishment of the wish so feelingly expressed by the late Mr. Semple, who fell mortally wounded near the spot where our buildings are erected. In a Letter, dated in the year 1815, he observed—"I have trodden the burnt ruins of houses, barns, a mill, a fort, and sharpened stockades; but none of a Place of Worship, even upon the smallest scale. I blush to say, that, over the whole extent of the Hudson's-Bay Territories, no such building exists. It is surely high time that this foul reproach should be done away from among men belonging to a Christian Nation. I must confess that I am anxious to see the first little Christian Church and Steeple of wood, slowly rising among the wilds; and to hear the sound of the first Sabbath-bell which has tolled here since the Creation."

As I was returning from visiting some of the Settlers about nine or ten miles below, one evening, the lengthened shadows of the setting sun cast from the buildings, and the consideration that there was now a landmark of Christianity in this wild waste, and an

An Indian called, in the most reduced state that I ever saw: he looked ghastly—his eyes sunk—and his whole frame trembling. Perceiving when he spoke that I did not understand him, he uncovered his arm and pointed to it, which was nothing but skin and bones. I gave him a few pieces of buffalo-meat and some potatoes: what I gave him was not, I am persuaded, sufficient to satisfy the cravings of his appetite; but, when he had greedily devoured one half, I observed him putting the rest under his covering: on my inquiring for what purpose he reserved it, he stood up and pointed to the plains, and, with tears gushing from his eyes, put his hand again in a horizontal, low position, as they always do when speaking of their children, exclaiming, with much apparent concern, "Awar sis! awar sis!"—to signify that his child was in the same condition. I was particularly struck with this instance of parental affection in a savage.

It is in the hope of rescuing these poor wanderers of the wilderness from the misery of their state that the Mission has been undertaken. Mr. West writes—

The Natives of this vast territory have been left, for centuries, to wander through life, uncheered even by a single ray of Divine Truth: but this darkness is, we trust, passed; and a foundation is now laid to extend the blessings of religion, morals, and education.

asylum opened for the instruction and maintenance of Indian Children, raised the most agreeable sensations in my mind; and led me into a train of thought, which awakened a hope, that, in the Divine compassion of the Saviour, it might be the means of raising a Spiritual Temple in this wilderness to the honour of His Name. In the present state of the people, I considered it no small point gained, to have formed a religious establishment. The outward walls, even, and spire of the Church, cannot fail of having some effect on the minds of a wandering people, and of the population of the Settlement.

During winter, the severity of the weather is such as sometimes to preclude the Settlers from assembling for Divine Worship; but, from the beginning of March till the middle of June, my Congregation on the Sunday consisted, on an average, of from 100 to 130. The afternoon we devoted to gratuitous instruction of all who would regularly attend; and we had generally 40 or 50 Scholars, including some Adult Indian Women, married to Europeans, besides the Indian Children on the Missionary Establishment.

On leaving the Settlement, I addressed a crowded Congregation in a Farewell Discourse; and, having administered the Sacrament to those who joined cordially with me in prayer, that the Missionary who was on his way to officiate in my absence might be tenfold, yea, a hundredfold, more blessed in his Ministry than I had been, I parted with those of the Church-Mission Establishment with tears. It had been a long, and anxious, and arduous scene of labour.

From Mr. Jones's communications, we extract the following particulars:—

Missionary Papers, No. XLIV. Christmas, 1826.

I feel confident, that that *tree of life* is now striking root at this place, which will eventually drop its fruits over this immense continent, and whose leaves will be for the healing of the bewildered Indian.

It is truly gratifying to my soul, on the Sunday Morning, to look out of my windows, and see the people coming in groups, as far as the eye can reach : and my pleasure is doubly heightened, when I perceive them as they pass, to be principally Half-Breed Natives and Indians.

Mr. Jones mentions the following circumstances, to shew the improving spirit of industry among the people :—

Several Indians, young men from 15 to 20 years of age, have been very urgent lately to be admitted into our establishment : they say, that their parents want them to leave off the Indian life ; and that they would work in the day, and learn to read in the evening.

The Missionaries hope to form an Indian Village. Several Indians had asked leave to pitch their tents and make gardens near the Mission House.

A New Church was now begun, lower down the River, on a plain called Image Plain : of this Mr. Jones says—

Most of the Settlers in that vicinity have INDIAN FAMILIES, who cannot attend Worship at the present Church, and they are as much bereft of the means of religious instruction as when in their native forests. When the building is completed, I purpose to establish Worship for the more immediate benefit of this interesting but long-neglected and injured class of fellow-beings.

This Church was opened on the 30th of January 1825. The Congregations at both Churches are large and attentive. Mr. Jones writes—

The Lord is daily adding new encouragements to the friends of Religion in this Country : every thing in and out of the Colony wears a very highly interesting and promising aspect. I preach at both Churches every Sunday, and, if I have no calls to visit the sick &c., catechize the Indian School, at my own house, in the evening. I have two Weekly Lectures ; one on Tuesday Evening, at the Image Plain, about ten miles from my residence ; and the other on Wednesday Evening, at the Upper Church.

Mr. Jones concludes his Journal with these animating words—

Friends of Jesus and of the Missionary Cause, support us ! All is encouraging ; and we shall reap, in *due time*, if we faint not.

The Indian Children manifest a susceptibility of religious feeling which is very encouraging. Mr. Jones writes, in reference to one of his Sunday-Evening Catechizings—

The Indian Boys come, as usual, in the evening, to my house, to say their catechisms and to sing ; and it is, indeed, the most pleasing part of the Sabbath to me, to join them in this simple Service, and to hear them singing the praises of the Only True God. This

evening, I was more than usually interested, as it was the first time that I witnessed them shedding tears. In giving out to them the 236th Hymn of the "Sunday-Scholar's Companion"—"Lord, while little Heathens bend," it was natural that I should be led to tell them of the cruelties practised in the East, which are alluded to in that Hymn : they were all much affected ; and one of them, an Ossiniboia Indian, asked, "SIR ! IS NO SCHOOLMASTER THERE, TO TELL THEM NOT ?" I told them that many were gone from home to tell of Jesus Christ ; as I had done, to come to them : they looked at one another with smiles, which indicated their inward approbation.

There is good prospect of extending the Mission : far to the westward, near the Rocky Mountains, on the shores of the Great Pacific Ocean, the Indians do not wander and roam abroad, but live in villages and cultivate the ground ; and far to the northward, on Hudson's Bay, tribes of the people called Esquimaux live : many of these are ready to receive Christian Teachers, and both these bodies of people have sent children many hundred miles to the Society's School.

More Indian Boys have been received into the School : the parents shew readiness in sending their children, and the children to be instructed : two have died, it is hoped happily : one of them, when asked—

"Should you die soon, where do you think you will go ?"—replied, "I hope to the good place"—"Can you tell me why you hope so ?"—"Because Jesus Christ loves me"—"What reason have you to think so ?"—"The Testament says, He died for sinners."

The Missionaries hope, that, in time, they shall be able to send some of the Half-breeds, that is, children of European Fathers by Indian Mothers, as Teachers of their countrymen. Mr. Cockran says of them—

The Word of God flourishes most among the Half-breeds : it seems to sink deep into their hearts, and is become the rule of their lives.

We shall conclude in the words of one of the Missionaries—

All, all, is encouraging to proceed : yet I will not conceal my fears, that expectations may be raised too high, as to the progress that may be made in that vast field of labour which may present itself—"There are a great many willows to cut down and roots to remove," as an Indian Chief said to me when he welcomed me to the country, "before the path will be clear to walk in." The axe, however, is laid to the root of the tree ! God grant that the Light, which first sprang up in Judea, may break forth on every part of these vast territories, dissipate the present darkness of the Natives, and lead them to the enjoyment of the *fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ*.

Let every one say from his heart. Amen!